DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 469 999 CG 031 997

AUTHOR	Jary, Suzie
TITLE	Performing and Creative Artists as a Resource in the World of Work.
PUB DATE	2002-11-00
NOTE	7p.; In: Thriving in Challenging and Uncertain Times; see CG 031 989.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Artists; *Career Change; *Career Counseling; *Counseling Techniques; Employment Services

ABSTRACT

Performing and creative artists from all art forms develop particular skills and abilities that make them a valuable resource in the world of work. The art forms of dancing, singing, acting, drawing, sculpting, or writing impact and shape individuals with positive personal qualities, abilities, traits and skills that are marketable in other areas besides the arts. This concept serves as a foundation for helping the individual to feel a sense of hope and confidence that they can participate and succeed in another field. Career counselors and counseling professionals can benefit from this information. Assisting artists to identify and claim these special skills is helpful in working with them one on one to make changes in their lives, either to create income or transition to a new career. This chapter attempts to inform and enlighten career counselors and other counseling professionals with an approach to assist creative and performing artists with career services. (GCP)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 469 999

Performing and Creative Artists as a Resource in the World of Work

by

Suzie Jary

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CG031997

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Performing and Creative Artists as a Resource in the World of Work

Suzie Jary, MSW, CSW

Career Transition For Dancers

The Concept and Its Importance

Performing and creative artists from all art forms develop particular skills and abilities that make them a valuable resource in the world of work. The art forms of dancing, singing, acting, drawing, designing, sculpting, or writing impact and shape individuals with positive personal qualities, abilities, traits and skills that are marketable in other areas besides the arts. This is a concept that curiously often needs to be pointed out to artists. It serves as a foundation for helping the individual to feel a sense of hope and confidence that they can participate and succeed in another field.

This concept and approach is important because many artists may need to find a new career due to many factors, economic, physical or psychological. Also, the reality is that the majority of artists will need to find other ways to create income while they are pursuing their art. An approach that engages and expands the artist's self concept is critical because the environment and training to develop as an artist can be insulated and specific. This often leads to the mistaken sense that the artist has no "skills" that the "real world"wants. Highlighting what they already bring with them from their art career is key to self-knowledge and self-awareness and is an important piece of the self assessment.

Career Counselors and counseling professionals in universities, colleges, private practice, not-for-profits, social service agencies, government agencies and corporate settings can benefit from this information. Assisting artists to identify and claim these special skills is helpful in working with them one on one to make changes in their lives, either to create income or transition to a new career.

In particular, college career counselors and those in private practice will find the discussion of this topic helpful. Some college students who are fine arts majors may chose not to pursue their artform as a livelihood. Or more typically, many will need to develop additional income streams in order to support themselves as they continue to pursue their art. The realities of the economic instability of the arts and the need to have multiple earning options is a way that college career counselors can really help young artists. The need to help young artists develop an expanded self concept and have alternatives for creating economic stability is an area of need in our educational system.

Artists' Training Develops Valuable Skills

For over eight years I have worked with professional dancers from all styles of dance at Career Transition For Dancers. This national not-for-profit organization was established in 1985 and is the only organization in America dedicated solely to assisting professional dancers to identify and pursue new careers. It is supported with private funding and provides career services and educational funds to eligible professional dancers at no charge. My professional career counseling experience there and my own personal experience as a former Broadway dancer who was also a client at Career Transition For Dancers is the context from which I write.

In my professional experience I recognized that identifying for artists the transferable skills they have developed is information that is not obvious to them. Like most people, artists are often blind to their own unique abilities and take them for granted. Committing these traits to paper was a resource tool I created and distributed to every dancer I came in contact with.

The positive personal qualities and work-related traits and characteristics that creative and performing artists develop I put into the acronym "Adaptive Skills," because that is what they are. The following are the skills:

- Ability to work independently or as part of a team
- Discipline and dedication
- Ability to take direction
- Persistence and ability to work and respond quickly under pressure
- Trained to think on one's feet and adapt quickly to change
- Intelligent and hard working
- Vitality, energy and stamina
- Engaging physical presence
- Strive for excellence
- Keen motivation to improve one's skills
- Individuals who are successful in one career are more likely to be successful in another
- Learning skills of focus and concentration
- Listening and observing skills
- Strong sense of commitment and responsibility

In the close to 1,200 dancers that I have worked with, all were excited by seeing this list of abilities and having it in their hand. Finally, a tangible validation and confirmation of what they had always known about themselves. However, they didn't have the language to describe how they behaved in order to create their art. More importantly, with limited knowledge of other work environments they had no idea that these traits mattered anywhere else in the work world, that these capabilities were skills and transferable and even marketable. This added self-knowledge helped the artist develop a new way of looking at themselves and their possibilities for future. Instead of the inaccurate self-appraisal "I have no skills," artists can claim and take ownership of these "soft" or adaptive skills that they possess.

Transferability and Marketability Seen

Representatives from a high profile financial services company approached Career Transition For Dancers to recruit dancers to its ranks. One manager there recognized that the adaptive skills that performers develop is the material that they couldn't teach their employees. He knew that people with these adaptive skills could be taught the functional and knowledge skills. However, it was extremely difficult to instill in people the striving for excellence, concentration, flexibility and team player skills that artists have.

Interpreting a correlation between the high pressure environment of investment banking and the arts and theater, the financial services manager knew performers have to work with a range of personality styles and temperaments of different choreographers and directors. Also, the ability to follow directions and work as part of a company or cast is critical to producing the opening night performance, or final product or presentation. He observed that all these aspects made them suitable for the fast paced, intense work setting of finance. Because, certainly, the curtain going up is an unforgivable bottom line!

Thanks to these adaptive skills, performing artists are "outstanding performers," whether on the stage or in a new profession. At Career Transition For Dancers and The Actors' Fund of America's Actors' Work Program, an employment and training program of the national human services organization for the entertainment industry, remarkable results have been seen. Both organizations have observed hundreds of artists becoming highly successful in just about every field in the world of work or being top honors students when they return to school.

Career Transition For Dancers is a founding member organization of the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers, (IOTPD), established in 1993. This is an international organization that tries to raise awareness globally about the issues of transition for dancers and advocates to provide them with the resources they need to make career changes. The other three founding member organizations in the United Kingdom, Canada, and The Netherlands, all report that dancers in their programs consistently achieve extremely high academic averages and excel in a wide variety of new fields.

Additional Uses of Concept

The adaptive skills language can be used in a resume. In a "Summary of Qualifications" or a "Profile," artists can list the abilities and traits they feel are particularly strong for them. Besides content for the resume, it gives them some language to talk about themselves at interviews or with people with general. Just as the artist has missed the obviousness of their transferable skills, so have others.

Verbally articulating what is required in the nature of their performing and creative work educates people. Describing and highlighting the demands and requirements can expand people's image of the broad work-related potential of the artist. Instead of thinking of a dancer only as a physical body executing spinning pirouettes and grande jete leaps, they understand the time, concentration, focus, commitment, and hard work that the individual has utilized to achieve this outcome. In regard to the performance, they can see how the artist has had to take direction and individual responsibility while coordinating and working with a team of people, as well as sets, costumes, or props.

Additional Needs of Artists

Along with recognizing and claiming these adaptive skills, most artists will have to utilize additional resources to fully make changes in their career and work life. Continuing the self-assessment process to include functional and knowledge skills, interests, values, and personality style is advised. Individual or group sessions that provide practical skill-building for career exploration, job search and interviewing strategies, networking skills, resume and cover letter development, and identifying further education and training to enter a new field is also needed. Working one on one with a career counselor helps many artists to not only gain the practical information of career development, but the expanded perspective and emotional support to try something else in the world of work.

Support group and group counseling sessions with other artists is recommended to provide emotional support and manage the isolation the artist may feel. Group sessions with their peers has proved instrumental for many artists to follow through on implementing practical steps. However, some artists may need additional psychological support to cope and manage making changes in their work life. Psychotherapy services to manage the psychological and emotional process of letting go and moving on from art being their sole identity has been necessary and in fact critical for some artists.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper attempts to inform and enlighten career counselors and other counseling professionals about an approach to assisting creative and performing artists with career services. The "soft skills," or adaptive skills that performing artists and creative artists develop were identified in a user-friendly acronym. Pointing out how these very same skills are critical for success in any field and highly valued by employers in all areas of the world of work can help the artist to see that they have transferable and marketable skills. This can instill hope and a sense of empowerment in the individual for additional and supplemental career options.

The experience of not for profit organizations that provide career services for artists provides the evidence that artists can be successful when they work in other fields and environments. More importantly, these organizations have witnessed the positive psychological and emotional effect on self-esteem and self-efficacy that this approach engenders in artists.

Creative and performing artists provide a benefit to society by sharing their art with us. They are a group that does not often receive the acknowledgment for the incredible demands that their work requires. Identifying and articulating their valuable and transferable skills is a way to provide that recognition. As artists claim and honor these excellent work skills, they can recycle and refocus their work-related traits, abilities, skills, and characteristics to new arenas. Thus, they continue to contribute to and benefit society and are a valuable resource in the world of work.

References

Career Transition For Dancers. New York: The Caroline and Theodore Newhouse Center for Dancers, 200 W. 57th Street, Suite 808, New York, NY, 10019-3211, 212-581-7043.

Los Angeles: 5757 Wilshire Boulevard, 9th floor, Los Angeles, CA, 90036-3689, 323-549-6660. www.careertransition.org, info@careertransition.org, info-la@careertransition.org.

The Actors' Fund of America Actors' Work Program. New York: 729 Seventh Avenue, 11th floor, New York, NY, 10019, 212-354-5480, 212-921-4295. Los Angeles: 5757 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 400, Los Angeles, CA, 90036, 323-933-9244, 323-933-7615. www.actorsfund.org

International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers (IOTPD). Av Bergieres, CH-1004, Lausanne, Switzerland. www.fionline.it/scena_italiana/ing/iotpd.html.

Leach, Barbara. (Ed.) (1997) *The Dancer's Destiny*. Lausanne, Switzerland: International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers.

Jary, Suzie. (2000-2001) Dancers Reconsider Career Options. *Dance Magazine College Guide*, 9.

John, Suki. (2001, Sunday, November 25) Giving a Lift to Dancers Moving on After Dance. *The New York Times*, section 2, 6.

Recommended Resources

Eisner Eley, Susan, (1999, December) After the Curtain Call. *Dance Teacher*, 94. Magazine article about the services at Career Transition For Dancers and success stories of transitioned dancers.

Hamilton, Linda H. (1999) *Advice for Dancers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. This book has an excellent chapter on the psychological mourning process of letting go of the dancer identity.

McGreevy-Nichols, Susan. (2001, October) Thinking on Your Feet. *Dance Teacher*, 146. Magazine article about movement, learning and the mind/body link. A strong argument for and the necessity and value of including movement within an educational curriculum.

Meredith, Leda. (2001, September/October) Dancer's Next Steps. *Pointe*, 62. Magazine article about ballet dancers and their life after dance and how they managed the transition.

Pearl, Kenny. (1993) *Dance Life*. Toronto, Canada: The Dancer Transition Resource Centre. A comprehensive primer on how to transition from dance student to professional.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
X	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").